NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY
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Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

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EL7004-8 **Dr. Alexandru Spatariu**

The Online Learner **Activity # 3: Learner Assumptions**

Comments:

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You presented a few theories of learning. My suggestion is to read up more on them and see what the practical recommendations for instructions are. For example, even with technology use, it is not technology itself that helps improve learning, but the principles behind it (adaptability, feedback, interactivity, etc.).

Alex Spatariu 7 content 3 writing 2/23/2014

<Faculty Name> <Grade Earned> <Writing Score> <Date Graded>

e-Learning Assumptions

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e-Learning Assumptions

The majority of learners participating in an online learning program have made assumptions about the learning experience at some period during the learning process. During or prior to the start of an online course the learner establishes assumptions about the learning process and the instructor makes assumptions about the expected learner performance outcomes (Hannafin & Land, 1997). An educator's e-learning pedagogy (Bell, 2011; Siemens & Conole, 2011; Anderson & Dron, 2012) and the expected technology use (Hannafin & Land, 1997; Shriram & Warner, 2010; Siemens & Conole, 2011; Anderson & Dron, 2012) play major roles in helping to define course instruction and anticipated learning outcomes.

Learning Theory

Educational learning theories like behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism have helped develop online instruction but these theories primarily focus on traditional classroom instruction not online learning (Carwile, 2007; Shriram, & Warner, 2010). These theories were developed when learning was not majorly impacted by technology (Siemens, 2004). The connectivism theoretical perspective is the most recent addition to the existing learning theories; and most importantly combines relevant elements of other learning theories, social structures, and technology to create a powerful theoretical construct for the e-learning process (Siemens & Conole, 2011; Tschofen & Mackness, 2012). Connectivism is built on the following principles:

- Learning and knowledge rests in diverse opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting informational sources and tools.

- The learning process may reside in the use of technology.
- The need to know more is more desperate than what is already known.
- Making connections is needed to facilitate constant learning.
- The ability to recognize connections between ideas and concepts is a necessary skill.
- Accurate, up-to-date knowledge is the intent of all connectivist-learning activities.
- Decision-making and acquiring appropriate knowledge is a learning process. Choosing what to learn and synthesizing the meaning of incoming information is seen as a constantly changing reality (Siemens, 2004; Boitshwarelo, 2011; Kouke, 2012).

Additionally, over the last two decades, technology has modernized how we live, communicate, and learn (Siemens, 2004). Additionally, e-learning is rapidly becoming the new standard of modern education with a growth rate more than 35% (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, & Yeh, 2008). The understanding that knowledge in the digital age is based on rapidly changing technology while new information is continually being acquired drives the connectivism theory. Given this theory it is vitally important that individuals posse the ability to draw distinctions between important and unimportant information.

Assumptions

According to Guri-Rosenblit & Gros (2011), many individuals hold the assumption that learners participating in an online course can learn independently without the direct instruction of an educational instructor. Individuals that assume the online learning process is most effective when pursued alone have probably never been active participants in an online course program. One of the most common conceptions, by those participating in e-learning environments, is a lack of a shared learning environment and connections with their peers (Johnson, Hornik, & Salas, 2009). However, there is significant literature, which supports that

online learners constantly seek guidance from their instructors and fellow learners while participating in online courses (Boitshwarelo, 2011; Johnson, Hornik, & Salas, 2009; Tschofen & Mackness, 2012).

Additionally, the notion that the instructor's pedagogy should guide instruction while the technology drives the learning process is another assumption about e-learning. Instructors are also continuously providing instructional guidance and clarification of expected learner performance objectives to ensure the highest level of learning and comprehension opportunities are present during the online learning process (Shriram, & Warner, 2010; Siemens & Conole, 2011; Tschofen & Mackness, 2012). According to Siemens & Conole (2011), new technologies impact how information is shared and how people interact online; this assumption holds promise for application of the connectivism theory in education. Connectivism is a new learning theory for the digital age, and it encompasses four key principles for learning online: autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness through its self-directed learning (Tschofen & Mackness, 2012). One additional important principle relates to the role of the instructor in a connectivist environment. Typically the instructor's role is not of authority but rather a mentor and learning participant who models the learning process transparently (Boitshwarelo, 2011; Shriram, & Warner, 2010; Tschofen & Mackness, 2012.

Learning Assumptions Addressed

Online learning instructors should serve as guides or partners in the teaching and learning process (Anderson & Dron, 2011). However, many online instructors do not engage with their learners or take an active role in the learning process unless prompted by insufficient learner performance results. Interactivity between learners, course information, the instructor, and other learners have proven to increase learning outcomes (Sun et al., 2008; Abrami, Bernard, Bures,

Borokhovski, & Tamim, 2011). Assuming that the instructor will be engaging, approachable, and easily accessible is not wise, not all course instructors accept the theories that encourage autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness through self-directed learning. This is why self-efficacy in an online learning environment is so important to the learning process. Studies show that learners who engage with the learning content, the instructor, and other learning participants, aligned with appropriate and intentional technology, results in greater learner efficacy and learner success (Lam & Bordia, 2008; Ferguson & DeFelice, 2010).

Technology Assumptions Addressed

The growing report of informational technology learning in formal and informal learning environments cannot be ignored. According to Bell (2011), connectivism unaided is not sufficient enough to inform learning, but with the support of technology and a Web presence has the potential to increase the learning potential of today's digital natives. Practitioners of online learning environments perceive connectivism as relevant and lacking in rigor by its critics and that is due to a growing strain between the elements of connectivity and technology believed to be necessary for effective learning (Bell, 201; Guri-Rosenblit & Gros, 2011). The future of online learning will consist of interconnected learning communities, growing technology, and people (Shriram, & Warner, 2010). These notions and assumptions, when applied to e-learning, becomes clear that the advances of technology and Web 2.0 resources have opened new and exciting possibilities for education such as distance learning, technology assisted real-time learning, and open source networks.

Conclusion

The "ability to learn what we need for tomorrow is more important than what we know today" (Siemens, 2004, p. 6). A challenge for any learning theory is to set into motion acquired

knowledge at the point of application. As the flow of knowledge continues to advance and online learning becomes more prevalent among educational institutions, learners will need to be motivated by research based, effective, skills that are easily accessible and not by misconceptions and assumptions that leave them confused about the online learning process. Connectivism presents a standard of learning that accepts the shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal process or individual activity (Siemens & Conole, 2011), but one where learners collaborate and interact to gain knowledge (Shriram, & Warner, 2010). If learners are to experience success in a rising digital age the connectivism theory must be a source from which scholars and practitioners can draw insight. It is important to seize the knowledge and experience of all learners, provide opportunities for interactive sessions, and establish norms that will dismiss assumptions about the e-learning environment. Thus the instructor's engagement and technologies used in online learning environments are critical to the growth and facilitation of connectivism and demystifying assumptions about the process of learning online (Hannafin & Land, 1997; Shriram & Warner, 2010; Boitshwarelo, 2011; Siemens & Conole, 2011; Anderson & Dron, 2012).

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